

Bloomfield Citizen.

WEEKLY JOURNAL

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THE CITIZEN solicits contributions from the general public on any subject—political, religious, educational, or social—as long as they do not contain any personal attacks.

All communications must be accompanied by the writer's name, not necessarily for publication, but as an evidence of good faith.

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SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 1903.

Too Much Interference.

According to the returns made by the local Board of Tax Assessors to the County Board of Assessors, the town of Bloomfield made an insignificant increase in the amount of its real and personal taxable property in the past year. The net increase in both real and personal property after deducting increased exemptions was less than \$17,000. When this almost incredibly small sum is compared with the tremendous increases made in East Orange and Montclair the town of Bloomfield is placed in a humiliating attitude among Essex County municipalities. Almost any citizen can of his own personal knowledge point out enlarged industrial enterprises and new residences that in the aggregate indicate an increase in taxable wealth several times over in excess of the sum shown by the Board of Assessors.

The reason for Bloomfield's poor showing in increased valuation both in real and personal property is that the State Board of Taxation has so interfered with the work of the local board that a just and equitable assessment of property cannot be made in the town. The local Board of Assessors as a body has its own opinion of what is right and proper in the matter of assessment of local property for purposes of taxation. The State Board of Taxation by virtue of its official power assumes to disregard and set aside the work of the local assessors and to lower valuations in isolated and individual cases, and thereby cause a disarrangement and upsetting of the entire assessment system of the town. The State Board of Taxation under the present unsatisfactory make-up of the taxing machines of this State is a stronger body than the local Board of Assessors, and in any conflict of opinion the local Board must yield to the power and force of the State Board regardless of any question of knowledge of the properties where assessments are in dispute or of experience with local conditions and circumstances. In matters of property assessment the valuations fixed by the local Board of Assessors are the result of personal knowledge of the conditions existing in the vicinity of the property assessed, while the State Board has no knowledge, or an imperfect idea at the best, of the surrounding circumstances.

The local Board's work is the result of knowledge, study, and experience and a desire to reach an equitable valuation. The State Board's action is simply an arbitrary exercise of superior power.

In the ordinary course of events Bloomfield's increase in valuations this year should have been \$200,000. It is fair to assume that the \$183,000 loss is attributable to reductions made to meet with the State Board of Taxation's ideas of what is an equitable and just assessment on mills, residential and farm properties here, for in the past year or so the State Board has ordered reductions made in the assessment on all the above classes of property in Bloomfield, and not only has made reductions, but has threatened the local Board of Assessors that if they dared to assess the properties in excess of the State Board's figures the assessment would be arbitrarily reduced without argument of the case.

It is time that the town of Bloomfield took some steps to rid itself of the tyrannical rule of the State Board of Taxation in the matter of the local assessment of property for local purposes.

The loss this year of \$183,000 of increase in valuations and the high tax rate of \$3.10 are chargeable to the State Board's unwise interference with local affairs. An appeal should be made to the courts to determine the question of whether the local Board of Assessors or the State Board of Taxation is right in the matter of the proper valuation of property here for purposes of local taxation. For three years past the State Board of Taxation has been hammering down Bloomfield's assessments, and the result is now demonstrated in the sorry figure the town makes this year among its sister municipalities in the matter of a higher increase in financial growth and in an exorbitantly high tax rate. There are signs of an uprising against the State Board's interference in local taxation in other parts of the county. The

Sunday Call in its issue of August 24 says:

The fact is that there has been large development of public enterprise in both county and city without corresponding increase in the valuations of personal property, which has had the principal benefit of the advance in values during the last ten or fifteen years. All the burden of enterprise seems to be placed upon real property, upon the homes of the people, upon their holdings of real estate. Wonderful increases have been noted in every form of personal property, but the tax-gatherer does not see them.

The excuse is made by the local taxing authorities that when they attempt to tax personal property upon some basis of equality with the real estate, the State Tax Board interferes on behalf of the corporations and defeats the attempts to adjust the burden fairly. This seems probable, as the State Board appears to be designed solely for the purpose of protecting corporate property from local taxation; but we have seen no protest from the local authorities, and they seem to submit to any change in their estimates without a murmur. The citizen who owns real estate does not greatly care whether the blame for this growing burden of taxation should be placed upon the city, the county, or the State authority, but he does object to this steady increase in his annual payments. He would like to know why the vast increase in all personal property does not show in the tax record. Somebody is getting the benefit without paying the price.

Pool-room Ordinance.

The numerous places recently opened in this town for pool-playing purposes has been a matter of comment. These pool-rooms, as they are called, are subjected to no legal restrictions, and any one who can rent a room and purchase a pool-table can embark in the business of conducting a pool-room. The pool-rooms depend largely for patronage upon boys, youths and young men. The fact that so many boys frequent the places has led to complaints from parents, and the pool-room business is beginning to be regarded in the light of a social evil that must be dealt with by legal regulations.

An ordinance was introduced by Councilman Moore at the Town Council meeting Monday night that if it becomes a law will compel the proprietor of a pool-room to take out a license to conduct such a place, and will subject the business to a number of regulations of a restrictive character. The ordinance thus far has simply been introduced by title. Its provisions will be made known at the next reading. It has been unofficially stated that a license fee of fifty dollars has been proposed.

In introducing the ordinance Councilman Moore spoke of the remarkable increase of this class of resorts in this town within a recent period. There was reason in his opinion to believe that some of them were not conducted in a reputable manner, and it was the duty of the Council to take some action towards safeguarding the interests of the youths of the town.

Councilman Conlan asked if it was proposed to include the billiard and pool parlors of licensed hotels in the ordinance.

Mr. Moore replied that the exact terms of the ordinance had not yet been fixed, but the object was to include all public pool and billiard places.

Consolation.

Bloomfield's tax rate for this year is \$3.10, or 22 points higher than Montclair's. But Bloomfield need not feel discouraged. It will work out of those figures in due time and reach a lower rate. There is a time in the life of every municipality when expenditures for improvements pile up so high as to cause temporary fear that things are going to the bow-wow. If the improvements were needed, however, and introduced in the line of an investment for future growth, the municipality will ere long reap good returns to benefit those who were courageous enough to take an advanced step in opposition to the ultra-conservative taxpayer who can see nothing but figures in his tax bill. — Montclair Times.

An Old Sea Captain Dead.

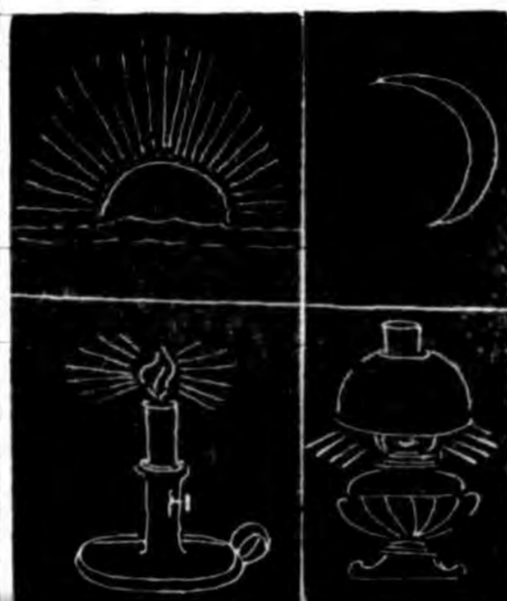
Capt. George M. Walker, late of the Old Dominion Line, died at his residence, No. 589 Union street, Brooklyn, on Friday morning, aged 77. On his retirement from active life, he was the oldest Captain sailing out of the port of New York. He was born at sea in July, 1826, his father being Captain of the British Brig "Fox". In his early career he sailed in the "Humboldt" of New York, Southampton and Havre S. S. Co., then on the "Washington," the "Franklin," and the "Arago." He then became captain of the "Fulton," and carried stores to Port Royal during the war in the sixties. He captured the "Margaret and Jessie" blockade runner and later another blockade runner, the "Banshee," off Wilmington, Del. The cargoes of these two vessels were sold for \$520,000. Later Capt. Walker commanded the "Raleigh," "Niagara," "Albemarle," and innumerable other well-known steamers. While on the "Albemarle" he received a gold medal for rescuing the crew of a wrecked schooner.

He led an exceedingly active life and retained to the very last years of his seafaring life his mental and physical faculties. He was held in high esteem by all the officers of the Old Dominion Steamship Company, with whom he was connected for so many years and was respected by all who came in contact with him.

Captain Walker was the father of thirteen children, the mother and five of whom survive.

Blackboard Work in Sunday-School.

An interesting method of teaching the International Sunday-school lessons has been adopted at the St. John's M. E. Church Sunday-school, Orange, N. J., which consists in illustrating the subject by means of a picture on the blackboard. It is the practice there at the close of the session to review the lesson taught, and this gives the reviewer an opportunity to reach the school as a whole.



The pictures are employed in such a way that they stand for or signify some central truth in the lesson; for instance, a picture will be drawn of a candle or a lamp, above this a picture of the sun and moon. Attention will be called to the fact that one kind of light is artificial and the other kind natural. This leads to the thought that man has a way of making things true himself, that always differs from what is divine or what God makes true, as the sunlight differs from the lamp-light.

As a picture of a chestnut with its outer shell, its inner shell, and its kernel will illustrate now when we have the Bible to study we learn that the valuable part is not in the kind of paper it is printed on or the binding of the book, which is the outer shell, or in the story told, which is the inner shell, but



In the meaning of the story which is the kernel or inmost, which is the part that sustains life when secured.

A few Sundays ago the superintendent, illustrating the descent of the Israelites from Abraham and their journey through the wilderness, used a picture of a clock dial which was drawn in chalk on the board. Starting at the top with the figure "12," and noting that the call of Abraham begins at the twelfth chapter of Genesis, there is a gradual descent to Isaac, then to Jacob, then twelve tribes in bondage, and Egypt and the Red Sea are marked at the figure "9." After crossing the Red Sea at this point the wilderness is made to occupy the lower half of the dial, through which it is necessary for them to pass, and as they gradually reach the Jordan at the figure "3" the journey becomes an ascent, which brings them back to the starting point of the story.



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